

LOCA SANCTA
AND THE REPRESENTATIONAL
ARTS OF PALESTINE

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IN its formative stage, Christian art centered in and disseminated from those great metropolitan cities of the Mediterranean which, in the course of time, became the seats of patriarchs: Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople. As the capitals of Roman emperors and Seleucid and Ptolemaic kings, and as wealthy commercial centers at important hubs of intercontinental trade, they provided fertile ground for the development of pictorial art deeply steeped in the Greek cultural past.

When at the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451 Jerusalem was established as the fifth patriarchate, this city was at a relative disadvantage compared with the other four patriarchal seats. Neither as a commercial nor as a political center had she been in a position to surround herself with comparable wealth or artistic culture. Moreover, by and large Judaism had been hostile to the representational arts, notwithstanding that, as the discovery of the frescoes in the synagogue of Dura has proved, the laws against images were not always strictly enforced.

However, after Jerusalem and other places in Palestine had become Christian, they were adorned with splendidly decorated buildings. Yet, judging from the literary sources, the most important buildings were not erected by local authorities or communities, but by outside benefactors, foremost such emperors and empresses of Constantinople as Constantine and Helen, Theodosius II and his estranged wife Eudocia, who lived in Jerusalem, Marcian, Zeno, and, of course, Justinian. It may be assumed that for the decoration of some of the buildings trained artisans were brought in from Constantinople, and thus we might expect that the art of Jerusalem, and of such other holy places in Palestine as Bethlehem, reflected to some degree the influence of the capital.

Our claim that imperially sponsored art did exist on Palestinian soil would however be little more than speculation were it not that there has survived fairly intact at least one holy site with such art, and this is St. Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai. In his *De aedificiis*, Procopius tells us that the monastery, built at the instigation of Justinian and dedicated to the Virgin (the dedication to St. Catherine is of later date), lies in what formerly was called Arabia and now is known as Palaestina Tertia.¹ When in the Constantian era three Palestinian provinces were established, the inclusion of the Sinai peninsula as part of the third may well have been motivated by the desire to include administratively the Moses mountain among the pilgrimage places of the Holy Land. There is a legend that Helen herself visited the Moses mountain, and at the end of the fourth century Aetheria, a noblewoman from Spain making a tour of Palestine, including Sinai, gives us a vivid

¹ V.viii.1, trans. H. B. Dewing and G. Downey, VII, Loeb (1940), 354ff. "In what was formerly called Arabia and is now known as 'Third Palestine,' ... a precipitous and terribly wild mountain, Sina by name, rears its height.... On this Mt. Sina live monks...the Emperor Justinian built them a church which he dedicated to the Mother of God"

account of the life of the monastic colony at the site of the Burning Bush.² The monastery's closest ties, ecclesiastically and culturally, had always been with Jerusalem.

When one enters Justinian's church, the focal point in the fortress-like monastery, one is struck by the contrast between the rough style of the basilica, built of the local red granite by the architect Stephanos of Aila (the modern Aqaba), and the refined style of the apse mosaic representing the Metamorphosis (fig. 1).³ Because of its outstanding quality and its style deeply steeped in the classical tradition, there is good reason to believe that Justinian had sent highly trained craftsmen from the capital for its execution. Constantinople had achieved the greatest perfection in this craft, which presupposes well-organized, competent teams, and one need only be reminded that in subsequent centuries the most ambitious mosaic programs outside of the Byzantine Empire, such as the mosques in Damascus and Cordoba, the Hagia Sophia in Kiev, and the Norman churches of Sicily, were either entirely or in their most important parts executed by artists from Constantinople.

The Sinai mosaic is very complex and, in spite of its clarity and simplicity in composition, shows many layers of meaning. In the present context I should like to confine myself to two details: one is the medallion in the midst of the prophets which shows King David beardless and dressed like a Byzantine emperor (fig. 2).⁴ Though it is difficult to prove, it seems quite plausible that the artist intended to depict in this prominent place Justinian himself, the founder of the monastery, in the guise of David. The other detail is the right panel above the triumphal arch, with Moses receiving the tablets of the law (fig. 3).⁵ Contrary to custom, he is depicted not ascending the mountain, but standing in a deep gorge, a detail which reflects knowledge of the jagged rocks of the mountain ridge of Ras es-Safsâf where, according to tradition, the event took place. Thus the mosaic gives us an insight into the mentality of an artist who came from Constantinople and tried to combine elements of imperial iconography with details of the terrain of the holy site.

In addition to the mosaic, executed *in situ*, one must reckon with movable objects imported from the capital, and, indeed, some of them still exist in the Sinai monastery. Only because of its isolation have icons from the periods before and during iconoclasm survived here in considerable number. Among the more than forty such icons or fragments thereof, most in encaustic technique, there are three of such outstanding quality that their Constantinopolitan origin can hardly be doubted. The first depicts the Virgin enthroned holding the Child, flanked by the soldier saints Theodore and George in stiff

² O. Prinz, *Itinerarium Egeriae*, Sammlung vulgärlateinischer Texte (Heidelberg, 1960), 1ff.; J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels. Newly translated with supporting documents and notes* (London, 1971), 91ff.

³ K. Weitzmann, "The Mosaic of St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai," *PAPS*, 110 (1966), 392ff. (here, older bibliography). For the Stephanos inscription carved into one of the wooden beams of the framework of the roof and the mosaic in all its details, cf. G. H. Forsyth and K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai. I: The Church and Fortress of Justinian* (Ann Arbor, 1973), pls. LXXX-LXXXI and CIII-CLXXXVII.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 13 and pls. CXIX B and CLXX.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15 and pls. CXXVII, CLXXXIII, and CLXXXV.

ceremonial poses and by two busts of angels in a very painterly style.⁶ The second shows a bust of St. Peter, about life-size, with a spiritual expression in his lively face and rendered in a dashing brush technique.⁷ The third, seemingly the earliest and painted perhaps still in the lifetime of Justinian, shows a bust of Christ, likewise about life-size (fig. 4).⁸ In this icon, the classical heritage is especially strong in the subtle modeling of the expressive head and the placement within a niche set against a subtly shaded sky. In Constantinople, especially at the imperial court, such classical style had survived in greater purity than in any other Mediterranean center.⁹ Yet, it can be assumed that imports from the capital were at no time very numerous and that, in Jerusalem as well as the other holy places of Palestine, the great majority of icons and presumably also of monumental paintings were local products. This also can be demonstrated by the holdings of Sinai, as we shall see later.

To what extent do the artistic treasures of Sinai as a Palestinian *locus sanctus* contribute to a better understanding of the representational arts of the *loca sancta* of Palestine in general and Jerusalem in particular? There are two possible approaches to this problem, one iconographic and the other stylistic; of these, the iconographic is the more promising, because the *loca sancta* stimulated the creation of images with very specific topographical details, while on the other hand it is more difficult to define a native Palestinian style because of the strong influence of outside models.

To date, specific Palestinian iconography has been discussed chiefly in connection with the ampullae of Monza, little silver flasks which contained oil from the holy places and have generally been dated in the second half of the sixth century.¹⁰ Also taken into consideration has been the painted lid of a box with relics from the holy places which is about contemporary and was discovered at the beginning of this century in the Sancta Sanctorum in Rome; it is now kept in the Vatican Museum (fig. 32).¹¹ We should like

⁶ G. and M. Sotiriou, *Icones du Mont Sinaï*, I (Athens, 1956), figs. 4–7; II (Athens, 1958), 21ff.; K. Weitzmann (with M. Chatzidakis, K. Miatev, and S. Radojčić), *A Treasury of Icons. Sixth to Seventeenth Centuries* (New York, 1967), pp. ix and LXXIX, pls. 1–3.

⁷ G. and M. Sotiriou, *Icones*, I, figs. 1–3; II, 19ff.; Weitzmann (with Chatzidakis, Miatev, and Radojčić), *Treasury*, pp. x and LXXIX, pl. 5.

⁸ M. Chatzidakis, "An Encaustic Icon of Christ at Sinai," *ArtB*, 49 (1967), 197ff., and figs. 1–3. All three icons will be published in detail in: K. Weitzmann, *The Sinai Icons from the Sixth to the Tenth Century* (Princeton University Press, in press), nos. B.1 (Christ), pls. I–II, XXXVIII–XLI; B.3 (Virgin), pls. IV–VI, XLIII–XLVI; B.5 (St. Peter), pls. VIII–X, LXVIII–LI.

⁹ K. Weitzmann, "Das klassische Erbe in der Kunst Konstantinopels," *Alte und Neue Kunst*, 3 (1954), 41ff. (repr. as "The Classical Heritage in the Art of Constantinople," in *idem, Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination*, ed. H. L. Kessler [Chicago, 1971], 126ff.).

¹⁰ R. Garrucci, *Storia dell'arte cristiana*, VI (Prato, 1873), 52–53 and pl. CLXXXV, 61–62 and pl. CDXL; D. V. Ainalov, *The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art* (New Brunswick, 1961), 224ff. (trans. from the Russian *Ellinisticheskie osnovy vizantiiskogo iskusstva* [St. Petersburg, 1900]); A. Grabar, *Martyrium* (Paris, 1946), II, 172ff.; III, pls. LXI–LXII; *idem, Ampoules de Terre Sainte* (Paris, 1958). Here, a complete photographic reproduction of all ampullae and the older bibliography.

¹¹ Ph. Lauer, *Le trésor du Sancta Sanctorum=MonPiot*, 15 (1906), 97 and pl. XIV, 2; H. Grisar, *Die Römische Kapelle Sancta Sanctorum und ihr Schatz* (Freiburg, 1908), 113ff. and figs. 59–61. The most thorough investigation of this object is by C. R. Morey, "The Painted Panel from Sancta Sanctorum," *Festschrift Paul Clemen* (Bonn-Düsseldorf, 1926), 151ff.; Grabar, *Martyrium*, II, 286; III, pl. XLVIII, 1.

to take these monuments as points of departure and relate other works of art to them, thus freeing them from their isolation and channeling them into the broader stream of Palestinian art. In this attempt the icons of Sinai will play a major role.

We shall not treat all iconographical subjects that are depicted on the Monza ampullae, but only those where new evidence broadens our views. Particularly important is the ampulla with the Nativity represented in a central medallion, surrounded by six others with scenes from the Life of Christ (fig. 5).¹² It shows the Christ Child wrapped in swaddling clothes, an ox, an ass, the star, the Virgin lying on a couch, and Joseph sitting in a pensive pose. Two elements are indicative of the locality: 1) the curved line of the cave, described by a pilgrim of the fourth century as the *spelunca...ubi natus est Dominus*,¹³ which usually is arched upward rather than downward, and 2) the structure closed by a grille. Grabar correctly associated this structure with the Constantinian sanctuary in the grotto of the Nativity. Both elements are accretions to the Gospel narrative, indicating that this is not merely the representation of a biblical event but of an actual locality as it appeared centuries after the event had taken place.

Related to the ampulla is the Nativity picture of the lid of the reliquary box, which is closer in some details to a common archetype, and less close in others (fig. 6).¹⁴ The figures of Mary, Joseph, and the Christ Child are essentially the same but the cave is rendered more convincingly in the lid. The main difference is the replacement of the grilled sanctuary by what scholars have usually described as the manger. The actual manger was a crib of wood, which in the wake of the nascent relic cult was replaced by one of silver and gold, as we know from Eucherius (*ca. A.D. 440*).¹⁵ The structure on the lid, however, is a massive cube with a niche in the center. This is the early form of the *altare fixum*, a so-called block altar, with a *fenestella*, a niche meant to enclose a relic, as seen in a sixth-century altar in the church of Bagnocavallo near Ravenna (fig. 7).¹⁶

There are actually two caves in the crypt of the Nativity church in Bethlehem, one marking the place of the Nativity proper and the other containing the crib (fig. 8).¹⁷ The *loca sancta* pictures do not distinguish between the two caves, and fuse them into one. In the lid picture, above Joseph's back at the right, there is a wall which is neither part of the cave proper nor an extension of the *mensa* of the altar. In my opinion this can only be part of the

¹² Grabar, *Ampoules*, 19, 52, and pl. vii. For latest discussion and further bibliography: L. Kötzsche-Breitenbruch in *RAC*, ed. Th. Klauser, IX (Stuttgart, 1974), s.v. "Geburt," col. 204ff.

¹³ P. Geyer ed., *Itinera Hierosolymitana saeculorum IV–VIII: S. Silviae Peregrinatio*, 42 (Vienna, 1898), 93, line 10f.

¹⁴ Good color reproduction in B. Rothmund, *Handbuch der Ikonenkunst* (Munich, 1966), pl. on p. 164. Kötzsche-Breitenbruch, *RAC*, s.v. "Geburt," col. 206ff. Here, further bibliography.

¹⁵ *Presepe Domini, exornatum insuper argento atque auro*, in T. Tobler, *Itinera et Descriptiones Terrae Sanctae*, I (Geneva, 1877), 53, par. ix. For further sources about the crib, cf. H. Vincent and F.-M. Abel, *Bethléem. Le Sanctuaire de la Nativité* (Paris, 1914), 136.

¹⁶ J. Braun, S.J., *Der Christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, I (Munich, 1924), 223–24 and pl. 1.

¹⁷ Vincent and Abel, *Bethléem*, 134ff. and pl. II.

grilled sanctuary. Actually, the tiny lid painting combines all three features of the *locus sanctus*: the cave, the sanctuary, and the altar.

The placing of the Christ Child upon the altar instead of in a crib raises still another problem. Could this motif, in addition to being an indication of the locality, also have a eucharistic meaning and be understood as a forerunner of the *amnos* or *meletismos* of a much later period? However this may be, the altar as such suffices to impart a liturgical element to the Nativity picture, and alludes to the mass read on it for pilgrims visiting the site.

The sanctuary is seen once more in the Nativity miniature flanking one of the canon tables of the well-known Rabula Gospels in Florence, executed in A.D. 586 in Zagba in Mesopotamia (fig. 9).¹⁸ Although different types were chosen for the Virgin and Joseph, probably because of the narrowness of the available space, the sanctuary has the same shape as that in the Monza phial, except that it is closed by a curtain instead of a grille. It is difficult to say which of the two motifs is the more original, and it even seems possible that the actual sanctuary had both, i.e., a curtain which could be drawn over the grille. What makes this miniature particularly interesting is the clearer separation of the altar from the sanctuary than in the lid painting. Furthermore, the painter unmistakably indicated that the altar was made of masonry, quite appropriate for a block altar.

Because of its liturgical significance, the altar becomes a very pronounced feature in the Nativity picture, as can be seen in two Sinai icons, both of which I consider products of a Palestinian atelier. The first, which I believe to belong to the eighth-ninth century (fig. 10),¹⁹ is surely later than the lid of the reliquary box, though it must be admitted that all dates of icons of this critical period must remain, for the time being, tentative. Here the masonry of the altar is not only especially emphasized, but extends into the area below the altar. Equally emphasized is the niche, though unfortunately most of its interior is flaked. However, two white lines indicate the chains of a hanging lamp and this is confirmed by the second Sinai icon, also presumably from the eighth-ninth century (fig. 11).²⁰ Here the altar, the sanctuary, and the cave are all fused into one, but at the same time special emphasis is placed on the altar niche with the hanging lamp.

From Palestine the *locus sanctus* picture with the masonry altar spread into neighboring countries, and we find a reflection of it as far away as Nubia, where a fresco of the Nativity from the early eleventh century is one of many biblical scenes adorning the walls of the cathedral of Faras (fig. 12).²¹ Not

¹⁸ C. Cecchelli, G. Furlani, M. Salmi, *The Rabula Gospels* (Olten-Lausanne, 1959), 55 and pl. fol. 4b. Kötzsche-Breitenbruch, *RAC*, s.v. "Geburt," col. 204 ff.

¹⁹ K. Weitzmann, "Some Remarks on the Sources of the Fresco Paintings of the Cathedral of Faras," in *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in Christlicher Zeit* (Recklinghausen, 1970), 331 and fig. 329; *idem, Sinai Icons*, no. B.41 and pls. xxviii and xciv.

²⁰ G. and M. Sotiriou, *Icones*, I, figs. 17-19; II, 33-35.; H. Skrobucha, *Meisterwerke der Ikonenmalerei* (Recklinghausen, 1961), 57 and pl. ii; Weitzmann, *Sinai Icons*, no. B.45 and pls. xxx and xcix-cl.

²¹ K. Michalowski, *Faras, Die Kathedrale aus dem Wüstensand* (Einsiedeln, 1967), 143ff. and pls. 63-69; Weitzmann, "Some Remarks on the Sources of the Fresco Paintings of the Cathedral of Faras,"

only is the ashlar work of the altar designed with great care, but the niche is framed by two columns and a horseshoe arch, and, in addition, there is on top of it a smaller niche, such as we see on the actual *altare fixum* of Bagnocavallo (fig. 7).

But we need not go as far as Nubia to find parallels. There are three Early Christian ivories, all of which display very prominently the now familiar block altar. At the bottom of a plaque which once formed the center of a five-part diptych wing and is now in Manchester (fig. 13),²² there is a Nativity with such an altar, though somewhat misunderstood and oversimplified, whose niche is set lower, forming an opening at the bottom, while the top fuses the *mensa* of the altar with the segmental termination of the sanctuary as seen in the Monza ampulla and the Rabula miniature. The ivory has been dated in the sixth century and Ainalov attributed it to a Syrian atelier.²³ The second example is a plaque on the Maximianus cathedra which, it is true, bears neither any indication of the cave nor of the sanctuary, but once again displays a huge masonry altar with a particularly large niche (fig. 14).²⁴ The place of origin of the Maximianus cathedra is still debated. While Morey, on the basis of close connections with surely Egyptian ivories, suggested an Alexandrian origin,²⁵ Volbach noticed influence from Syria, but also emphasized the connections with the art of Alexandria.²⁶ More recently, scholars like Kollwitz have preferred Constantinople as place of origin.²⁷ Perhaps the characterization of the cathedra style by Ainalov, the first to deal with this problem on a broad basis, comes closest to the truth: he considers it a work of Alexandrian characteristics done in Constantinople.²⁸ Yet, whatever the ultimate outcome of the stylistic analysis, we must assume the impact of a Palestinian *locus sanctus* picture which, as the previous documents have shown, radiated into the East Christian world in all directions.

The most interesting of the three ivories, however, is the Nativity plaque at Dumbarton Oaks (fig. 15),²⁹ in the niche of whose masonry altar one notices an object which surely is not a lamp but rather looks like a piece of drapery. Placed in the niche destined to enclose relics, its most natural explanation is that it represents the swaddling cloth—a relic which since the eleventh century has been exhibited in S. Maria Maggiore in Rome.³⁰ If this interpretation is correct, then this ivory offers the most specific altar representation of

331 and fig. 1. Cf. also the remarks about the altar by P. V. van Moorsel, "Die Wandmalereien der zentralen Kirche von Abdallah Nirgi," *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in Christlicher Zeit* (Recklinghausen, 1970), 105.

²² F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters*, 2nd ed. (Mainz, 1952), 65 and pl. 39, no. 127.

²³ Ainalov, *Hellenistic Origins*, 264 and fig. 122.

²⁴ C. Cecchelli, *La Cattedra di Massimiano ed altri avori romano-orientali* (Rome, 1936–44), 160ff. and pl. xxv.

²⁵ C. R. Morey, "The Early Christian Ivories of the Eastern Empire," *DOP*, 1 (1941), 44 and fig. 4.

²⁶ Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 68–69 and pl. 43, no. 140.

²⁷ J. Kollwitz, in *RAC*, IV (Stuttgart, 1959), col. 1129ff., s.v. "Elfenbein."

²⁸ Ainalov, *Hellenistic Origins*, 168ff. and figs. 73–81.

²⁹ A. Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Romanischen Zeit XI.–XIII. Jahrhundert*, IV (Berlin, 1926), 35, no. 124, and pl. xli.

³⁰ Vincent and Abel, *Bethléem*, 136.

all the *loca sancta* Nativity pictures, and this is true in another respect as well. At the extreme left there is, within a city gate, a baldachin with a grille between its front columns, similar to the grille closing the sanctuary in the Monza phial. Instead of placing the altar before this sanctuary, the artist has employed the paratactical method, dissolving the original spatial relationship and placing the two side by side, a process which allowed him to change the scale and place the altar in a more prominent position. The walled city, then, must be understood as Bethlehem. While scholars had taken polarized positions with regard to the date and locality of this and some related ivories, proposing either an Alexandrian origin around A.D. 600 or an eleventh- or twelfth-century South Italian origin, I myself have proposed, in a recent study, a Syro-Palestinian origin at the end of the seventh or in the eighth century.³¹

In our opinion, a holy site can give impetus to more than one rendering of the biblical event related to it. In a Coptic Gospel book in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, copte 13, written between 1178 and 1180 in Damietta by a certain Michael, there is a surprisingly realistic representation of the Nativity site (fig. 16),³² showing not a narrow cave but the larger crypt into which one descends by stairs through two gates. At the bottom of the right-hand flight of stairs the Christ Child in swaddling clothes lies, as usual, on the block-like altar, while the Virgin on the couch is closer to the left-hand staircase, where one shepherd looks through the open gate. This corresponds well to the real site: coming down from the southern entry, the altar of the crib, as Vincent and Abel's plan indicates (fig. 8), is to one's left while the Nativity cave is close to the northern entry. When this composition, which surely was not invented by the Coptic illustrator in Damietta, originated we do not know. It may well be mediaeval.

From this rather detailed discussion of the Nativity we can draw some general conclusions, which are valid also for other *loca sancta* pictures:

1. The Nativity picture with its specific features—the cave, the sanctuary, and the block altar—is not restricted to such small pilgrim souvenirs as the ampullae and the small reliquary box, but is found also in a miniature, on icons, diverse ivories, and fresco paintings—in other words, it occurs in a considerable variety of media.
2. Whereas the ampullae, the box, and the two Sinai icons are products of Palestine, and two of the ivories, the Manchester and the Dumbarton Oaks plaques, may also be Palestinian or perhaps Syrian, the Maximianus cathedra and the fresco of Faras point to the dissemination of *loca sancta* iconography beyond the borders of the Holy Land.
3. As witnessed by the Coptic miniature, there is no reason to assume that there was only one archetype for each *locus sanctus*.

³¹ K. Weitzmann, "The Ivories of the So-called Grado Chair," *DOP*, 26 (1972), 43 ff. and fig. 2. *Idem*, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*, III: *Ivories and Steatites* (Washington, D.C., 1973), 37 ff. and pls. xix, xx, color plate 3.

³² S. Shenouda, *The Miniatures of the Paris Manuscript Copte 13*, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University (1956), 144 ff. and fig. 56.

The holiest sites in Jerusalem are the Martyrium, the Anastasis, and between them Golgotha, where Constantine had erected the famous cross. It is thus not surprising to find the Crucifixion together with the Women at the Tomb the most frequent subjects on the Monza phials. There are, as has been observed by all scholars dealing with the ampullae, two types of the Crucifixion. The more common shows the cross of Golgotha, i.e., a representation of Constantine's monument, with a bust of Christ atop it (fig. 17),³³ and the other, much rarer, renders Christ full-length wearing the colobium, the long sleeveless robe which has always been associated with a Palestinian tradition (fig. 18).³⁴ Now, it will be noted that to each type of Christ a different pair of thieves is attached. Flanking the cross monument is the more common type of thief, with his arms outstretched, nailed on a crossbar at shoulder height. Where the arms are lowered, extending from hip level, we merely deal with a modification, resulting from the attempt to fit an originally rectangular composition into a roundel—a formal concession of the kind we will also meet in other compositions on the ampullae. On the other hand, the Christ clad in the colobium is flanked by a different, very rare type of thief whose arms are pulled over the crossbar, here omitted, and bound behind his back. Thus it is clear that we are dealing not only with two different types of Christ, but with two distinctly different compositions of the Crucifixion, harking back to different archetypes.

The second composition, with the colobium-clad Christ and the thieves with their hands tied behind their backs, occurs also on a Sinai icon belonging to our Palestinian group and dating around the eighth century (fig. 19).³⁵ Only one of the thieves, inscribed Gestas—it is the earliest monument with the name of the thieves—is fully preserved, and here the crossbar behind the fettered arms is clearly seen. As for the figure of Christ, two details are of particular significance: the icon is the earliest monument that shows Christ with both closed eyes and a crown of thorns.³⁶ While both details emphasize the Passion, there may have been still another reason for introducing the crown of thorns. This most conspicuous implement of the Passion was one of the holiest relics venerated in the church of Sion.³⁷ Thus, its first appearance in a Palestinian icon may also have topographical significance.

On the lid of the reliquary the Crucifixion occupies the center and twice as much space as the other scenes, thus indicating visually that Golgotha

³³ Grabar, *Ampoules*, Monza nos. 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10–11, 14, 15, and Bobbio nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 18.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Monza nos. 12, 13, and Bobbio no. 7.

³⁵ G. and M. Sotiriou, *Icones*, I, fig. 25; II, 39 ff.; Weitzmann, *Treasure of Icons*, p. xi, pls. 6–7, pp. LXXIX and XCIV; *idem*, in *Byzantine Art, An European Art. Lectures* (Athens, 1966), 153 and fig. 117; *idem*, "Various Aspects of Byzantine Influence on the Latin Countries from the Sixth to the Twelfth Century," *DOP*, 20 (1966), 9 and fig. 14; *idem*, "Eine vorikonoklastische Ikone des Sinai mit der Darstellung des Chairete," *Tortulae. Studien zu altchristlichen und byzantinischen Monumenten = RQ*, 30 Suppl. (Rome–Freiburg, 1966), 324 and pl. 83; *idem*, *Sinai Icons*, no. B.36, pls. XXV and LXXXIX–XC.

³⁶ This first appearance of the motif of suffering has been connected with the writings of Anastasios Sinaites by H. Belting and Chr. Belting-Ihm, "Das Kreuzbild im 'Hodegos' des Anastasios Sinaites," *RQ*, 30 Suppl. (1966), 36 ff. and pls. 6a–b and 83.

³⁷ *DACL*, VII, col. 2322 (s.v. "Jérusalem").

is the most important of the pilgrimage sites (fig. 20). With the Sinai icon it shares the colobium-clad Christ flanked by the Virgin and John, who also occur on some ampullae.³⁸ However, on the ampullae the space was too limited to depict Longinus with the lance and Stephaton with the sponge. In the Sinai icon Christ's side being pierced by the lance is only implied by the streams of blood and water that issue from His wound. On the other hand, the icon painter, because of the panel's vertical format, had space for the three soldiers casting dice. In spite of these divergencies, lid and icon share one important feature: the two mountains behind Golgotha, which in the lid are rendered realistically as a connected mountain ridge, while in the icon they are stylized as heaps of basalt cubes. These mountains have been identified as Gareb and Agra, hills which flank Golgotha.³⁹ Yet, lid and icon differ in the types of the thieves, and the differences are precisely the same as between the two groups of ampullae (figs. 17, 18).

At the same time, the picture on the lid is closely related to a miniature of the Rabula Gospels that repeats the topographical detail of the mountains Gareb and Agra in more naturalistic form (fig. 21).⁴⁰ Not only are the figures of Christ and the thieves similar, but so also are Longinus and Stephaton in their characteristic poses. The Rabula Crucifixion is the richest in detail: instead of having the Virgin and John flank Christ, it groups them together at one side in order to make room on the opposite side for the other three Marys; in addition, there are the three soldiers casting dice as in the Sinai icon. There are obviously complex relationships between the Crucifixion types on the ampullae, the lid, the icon, and the miniature, and it is difficult to decide whether we are actually dealing with two or three different archetypes.

Just as the sites of Golgotha and the Tomb are right next to each other, so in the majority of holy site pictures, and especially in the ampullae, are Crucifixion and the Women at the Tomb often united. In a few ampullae, however, the scene of the Women at the Tomb fills the whole roundel; in such cases the artisans were able to copy a few more details from a richer model. Thus, one of them, in addition to rendering the basic structure of the ciborium as it must have looked before its destruction by Chosroes II in A.D. 614, shows plants behind it to indicate the funerary temenos (fig. 22).⁴¹ The ciborium is enclosed by a grille that opens at the front, giving free view into the interior, i.e., the sepulcher proper. Within the opening is visible a cube-like object, which most scholars have identified with the "stone rolled away from the sepulcher" (Luke 24:2).⁴² However, a comparison with the parallel representation on the reliquary box (fig. 23) makes it quite clear that the cube is not just a stone but an altar, covered with a purple cloth with embroidered golden cross and *gammadiae*. That this was a common form of

³⁸ Grabar, *Ampoules*, nos. 9–11.

³⁹ W. de Grueisen, *Sainte-Marie-Antique* (Rome, 1911), 325.

⁴⁰ Cecchelli, Furlani, Salmi, *Rabbula Gospels*, 69 ff. and pl. fol. 13a.

⁴¹ Grabar, *Ampoules*, no. 3.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 21.

altar cover is evident from an encaustic panel, painted on the marble pilaster of the Sinai church, where Isaac kneels on an identically decorated altar (fig. 39). The altar in the sepulcher is yet another object connected with a *locus sanctus*: as in the case of the altar in or before the sanctuary of the Nativity cave, it has a liturgical significance and suggests the reading of the mass in this place.

The scene on the reliquary box is again more detailed, showing above the ciborium the cupola of the Anastasis church with a row of windows in the supporting tambour. The tambour occurs at least once more, on two lead ampullae, one at Dumbarton Oaks (fig. 24)⁴³ and the other in Detroit.⁴⁴ One can distinguish clearly a row of grilled windows with decorative fillings between them, but because of lack of space the cupola proper is omitted and the oval tambour condensed into two parallel curved bands. Moreover, this structure does not rest convincingly on the columns of the ciborium, but is somewhat suspended. What we have here is an image from memory in which the altar, the sanctuary, the ciborium, and the cupola are reduced to mere formulae, laid out more or less paratactically in disregard of their relative sizes and spatial relationships.

The illustrator of the Rabula Gospels, rather than imitating the actual tomb, depicted a Hellenistic tempietto with no distinctive features (fig. 21). Yet, in another detail the miniature preserved an element of the *locus sanctus* not seen in the previous copies: the stone rolled away from the sepulcher. Antoninus of Piacenza (about A.D. 570) describes it as follows: "The stone by which the tomb was closed lies now in front of the tomb. The natural color of the stone, which was hewn out of the rock of Golgotha, cannot now be discerned because the stone itself is adorned with gold and precious stones...and thereafter out of this very stone was made an altar in the place where the Lord was crucified."⁴⁵ Thus the miniature reflects an earlier state of the *locus sanctus*, i.e., before the stone was turned into an altar as it appears in the Monza phials and the box lid. In addition, following the Gospel story, it shows the guards, who were thrust down by the rays of light issuing from the open door of the tomb.

Despite these differences, miniature and reliquary lid share a decisive iconographical element: the Mary closest to the angel is dressed in purple and represents therefore the Mother of God. This contradicts the text of Matthew's Gospel (28:1) which clearly states that the two women were Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, i.e., the mother of James (27:56). Deviation from the Gospel text extends also into the third scene of the Rabula miniature, where the risen Christ appears to the two Marys and the one kneeling in the foreground is once more the Mother of God (28:9).

⁴³ M. C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, I: Metalwork, Ceramics, Glass, Glyptics, Painting* (Washington, D.C., 1962), 71 no. 87, and pl. XLVIII.

⁴⁴ P. Lesley, *Early Christian, Byzantine and Romanesque Art. Detroit Institute of Arts* (Detroit, 1939), 12ff. and fig. 3a-b.

⁴⁵ Geyer, *Itinera Hierosolymitana* (*supra*, note 13), 203.

That our identification is correct is confirmed by an early encaustic icon from Sinai with the representation of the Chairete from about the seventh century, where the Virgin, however, is not kneeling in the foreground but standing upright and inscribed Η ΑΓΙΑ ΜΑΡΙΑ in the old-fashioned manner instead of ΜΗΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΥ (fig. 25).⁴⁶ It is an icon of the Palestinian group, and thus strengthens our evidence that this particular iconography is Palestinian, although Christ's appearance first to His mother is found in texts as far back as the 88th Homily of Matthew by John Chrysostom as well as in a hymn of Romanos.⁴⁷ Topographically this idea is expressed by having the Anastasis church flanked at its right with a chapel of the Virgin.⁴⁸ Thus, of the three scenes of the Rabula miniature, the Crucifixion and Chairete are paralleled in Sinai icons (figs. 19, 25), and the Marys at the Tomb in the lid of the box (fig. 23).

The next scene to be discussed is the Ascension, and here the points of departure are, as in the previous cases, the Monza ampullae. As in the Crucifixion, two versions are discernible, and once more the differences are not due to artistic liberties of individual artists, but correspond to similar distinctions in the related works of art. In the first version the Virgin is depicted in profile, raising her hands to the ascending Christ, and Peter and Paul, flanking her, show their emotion by recoiling poses (fig. 26).⁴⁹ One might refer to this as the "narrative type," in which the emphasis is on action. It has a parallel in a Sinai icon of the Palestinian group, the earliest extant feast icon, still belonging to the sixth century (fig. 27).⁵⁰ It may well precede in date the ampullae and the Ascension on the reliquary box (fig. 29) to which it is stylistically related—one will notice in both, to point out just one detail, the sharply piercing eyes. Unfortunately, the center of the icon was destroyed and has been badly restored by Pater Pachomios, the last icon painter of Sinai, who died in 1960. Originally this icon had a Virgin in profile to the left—her raised covered arms are still preserved, as are, when one looks closely, the tip of her nose and her lips. Together with the recoiling pose of the flanking Paul (Peter at the Virgin's left is not preserved), we find here the same narrative type as in the ampulla.

In the second version the Virgin Orant faces the beholder, unaware of the commotion around her (fig. 28).⁵¹ Not called for in the Gospel text, she was introduced for dogmatic reasons to emphasize the doctrine of the Incarnation, visualizing John 3:13: "No man has ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man which is in heaven." Clearly the isolated, frontal Virgin expresses this dogmatic idea more distinctly than the

⁴⁶ K. Weitzmann, "The Jephthah Panel in the Bema of St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai," *DOP*, 18 (1964), 346 and fig. 9; *idem*, "Eine vorikonoklastische Ikone mit der Darstellung des Chairete," 317 and pl. 80; *idem*, *Sinai Icons*, no. B. 27, pls. xxi and LXXV.

⁴⁷ Weitzmann, "Eine vorikonoklastische Ikone," 320.

⁴⁸ H. Vincent and F.-M. Abel, *Jerusalem*, II (Paris, 1914), 253 and fig. 123.

⁴⁹ Grabar, *Ampoules*, no. 16.

⁵⁰ G. and M. Sotiriou, *Icones*, I, figs. 10–11; II, 25–26; Weitzmann, "Eine vorikonoklastische Ikone," 323 and pl. 82b; *idem*, *Sinai Icons*, no. B. 10, pls. XIII, LV–LVI.

⁵¹ Grabar, *Ampoules*, no. 10.

profile type. In addition the more tranquil pose of the flanking Apostles enhances the hieratic character of the composition, and we may well call this the “hieratic type” of Ascension. This composition has its parallel in the reliquary lid, where, however, the Apostles are of mixed types (fig. 29).⁵² The quietly standing Paul corresponds to the hieratic version and the recoiling Peter to the narrative.

Moreover, the ampulla contains two additional elements: the hand of God beneath Christ’s throne and a descending dove. This clearly is a reference to the Pentecost, and the hand of God also occurs in the Ascension picture of the Rabula Gospels (fig. 30).⁵³ Since this miniature also has the frontal Virgin Orant, it is related to the hieratic type of the ampullae, while being distinguished from it by the incorporation of elements of a third theme, the Vision of Ezekiel, with the cherubim and the wheels of fire. Apparently, then, the Rabula miniature is a third type of Ascension picture within the orbit of Jerusalem iconography. This is not the place to deal with its complex iconography, involving the Incarnation doctrine and the dogma of the two natures of Christ: suffice it to say that, in principle, such complex and rather unique compositions as this were not invented by miniaturists illustrating the biblical narrative, but they rather reflect monumental paintings, as is also suggested in the present case by its inherent monumentality and by the fact that the combination of Ascension and Vision of Ezekiel occurs again and again in apse compositions, as, e.g., in Bawit (fig. 31).⁵⁴ If I am correct in thinking that the Rabula miniature reflects a monumental composition created within the orbit of Jerusalem, then it is legitimate to ask for which church this might have been invented. The most likely place would obviously be the church of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives, as was suggested by Ainalov.⁵⁵ I am aware that this contradicts the results of the investigations of the late Professor Albert Friend which were presented in two lectures at Dumbarton Oaks in 1945, but were never published.⁵⁶

Unfortunately, I cannot present here in detail Friend’s arguments about the Ascension. He thought that it formed a pair with the Crucifixion miniature (fig. 21), reflecting mosaics which once decorated the apse wall of the church of Sion. His arguments were based on the iconographical grounds that, in both, the dogma of the Two Natures of Christ is expressed with particular emphasis, as well as on stylistic grounds, explicitly pointing at the similar border pattern which could be interpreted as a reflection of mosaic technique. Yet, in my opinion there are also basic differences, which must not be overlooked. The Ascension is a monoscenic composition of truly monumental character, while the other miniature, divided into two registers, has a corre-

⁵² Weitzmann, “Eine vorikonoklastische Ikone,” 323 and pl. 82a.

⁵³ Cecchelli, Furlani, Salmi, *Rabula Gospels*, 71 and pl. 13b.

⁵⁴ J. Clédat, *Le Monastère et la Nécropole de Baouit*, MemInstCaire, 12 (Cairo, 1904), 73ff. and pls. XL–XLIV (Chapel XVII).

⁵⁵ *Hellenistic Origins* (*supra*, note 10), 84 and fig. 40, 242.

⁵⁶ The lectures were given on April 2 and 4 under the titles “The Rabula Gospels and the Church of Sion,” and “The Rabula Gospels and the Theology of Chalcedon.”

spondingly smaller figure scale and, moreover, a decidedly narrative character with its accumulation of figures in the Crucifixion, and the movement of action from left to right in the scenes of the Women at the Tomb and the Chairete in the lower register.

The organization in strip form actually is more closely related to the lid of the reliquary box (fig. 32),⁵⁷ which not only resembles a collective icon, but may well have actually served simultaneously as a relic container and a pocket-size icon for private worship. Such a possibility is not so remote, in view of the fact that quite a number of pre-iconoclastic icons had protective lids, for reasons of portability, and thus a boxlike appearance,⁵⁸ differing from the Sancta Sanctorum box only in that the latter includes some relics. That such collective icons existed at an early period is proved by the Sinai icon of the Palestinian group which, in addition to the already discussed Nativity, includes the Presentation in the Temple, Ascension, and Pentecost (fig. 33).⁵⁹ In the lid and in this Sinai icon we have the preliminary stages of what, in the Middle Byzantine period, was to become the widespread collective icon with the twelve major feasts of the Orthodox Church.

Yet, in the case of another miniature of the Rabula Gospels I am in full agreement with Friend's paper on its derivation from a monumental model. In the picture of the Pentecost (fig. 34)⁶⁰ he saw a copy of a composition which once decorated the chapel of the Holy Spirit in the church of Sion, and the following remarks are largely based on Friend's notes. He adduced three arguments, all of which, I believe, are valid. 1) There is evidence that, at least in the time of the Crusades, there was in the Pentecost chamber, which had been incorporated into the church of Sion, a mosaic representing this subject which may very well have been a replacement for, or a restoration of, an older one.⁶¹ 2) In the miniature the arch casting a shadow and the decoration of the spandrels suggest a niche and thus indicate an architectural setting for the truly monumental figure composition. 3) There is an iconographical reason to connect this picture with the church of Sion. One naturally assumes that the Virgin should be flanked by the Princes of the Apostles, but in the present composition Peter and Paul are not even clearly identifiable. The apostle at the Virgin's honored right side is characterized by a long, somewhat sparse white beard. He, no doubt, is James, the brother of the Lord, as he appears in two portrait medallions in an early thirteenth-century *Sticherarion* on Mt. Athos, Kutlumusi, cod. 412, once accompanying the *troparion* for October 23, St. James' calendar day (fig. 35a), and the second time with David for December 29 (fig. 35b).⁶² While the first medallion shows his individual features more clearly, the second is important because of James' associa-

⁵⁷ Cf. note 11.

⁵⁸ Weitzmann, *Sinai Icons*, nos. B.10 and B.15.

⁵⁹ Cf. note 20.

⁶⁰ Cecchelli, Furlani, Salmi, *Rabbula Gospels*, 72 and pl. fol. 14b.

⁶¹ H. Vincent and F.-M. Abel, *Jérusalem Nouvelle*, II, 3 (Paris, 1922), 460.

⁶² For this manuscript, see O. Strunk, "St. Gregory Nazianzus and the proper Hymns for Easter," *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of A. M. Friend, Jr.* (Princeton, 1955), 83 and pl. xii. Professor Strunk is preparing a facsimile edition of this manuscript, important for musical history.

tion with David. The tomb of David was part of the same structure which included the *Coenaculum*, i.e., the Last Supper- and the Pentecost-chambers, and therefore, according to the Jerusalem *Typicon*, the joint feast of David and James was celebrated at Sion church.⁶³ The Kutlumusi manuscript is closely related to another *Sticherarion* in the Sinai library, cod. 1216,⁶⁴ and both may actually be by the same hand. In a recent study I have tried to demonstrate that the miniatures of the Sinai codex are related to crusader art, and thus it is likely that both manuscripts are Palestinian.⁶⁵ You will notice that in both miniatures of the Kutlumusi codex James, as the first bishop of Jerusalem, is dressed in episcopal garments. Moreover, the church of Sion, the seat of the patriarch of Jerusalem, possessed the throne of St. James as one of its greatest relics. All this indicates that the strong emphasis on James in the Rabula miniature clearly points not only to Jerusalem, but to Sion church in particular, and this is perhaps the strongest evidence for considering the Rabula miniature a copy of a monumental composition made for the Pentecost chamber.⁶⁶

Moreover, it may not be accidental that the only other Pentecost with standing Apostles I can call to mind⁶⁷ is in a twelfth-century Gospel book in Florence, Laurentian Library, cod. Conv. soppr. 160, though here the Virgin is omitted and the conventional pair of Peter and Paul are placed in the center (fig. 36).⁶⁸ Stylistically, the miniatures and ornament of this manuscript are closely related to a Gospel book in the Princeton Library, cod. Garrett 3, which is dated A.D. 1136 and was written in the Saba monastery near Jerusalem.⁶⁹ Thus the Florentine Gospels is quite assuredly a Palestinian product as well, a clear indication that this specific Palestinian iconography survived for many centuries.

It cannot be the purpose of the present study to be complete in the enumeration of *loci sancti* pictures. Our intention has rather been to select those which give new insights through the inclusion of new material. Yet, we should like to discuss one more picture, and one which commemorates not an episode from Christ's life but one from the Old Testament. On a fifth-century ivory pyxis in Berlin the Sacrifice of Isaac takes place before a structure consisting of a flight of stairs leading to a platform on which stands an altar (fig. 37).⁷⁰

⁶³ F. C. Conybeare, *Rituale Armenorum* (Oxford, 1905), 527.

⁶⁴ Strunk, "St. Gregory Nazianzus," 85 and pl. XIII.

⁶⁵ K. Weitzmann, *Illustrated Manuscripts at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai* (Collegeville, Minn., 1973), 25 and fig. 35.

⁶⁶ The apostle to the left of the Virgin may be James, the son of Alphaeus, if we can trust also in this point the *Sticherarion* of Kutlumusi. Cf. the medallion portrait on fol. 29v.

⁶⁷ The now entirely lost mosaic in the south gallery of Hagia Sophia at Istanbul, which, as Cyril Mango has proved, Salzenberg had wrongly reconstructed with standing apostles, originally had seated apostles, as indicated in a drawing by Loos from 1710. C. Mango, *Materials for the Study of the Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul*, DOS, VIII (Washington, 1962), 35ff. and figs. 22, 29–30.

⁶⁸ G. Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'Evangile* (Paris, 1916), 471 and fig. 495, 543 and fig. 582; A. M. Friend, Jr., "The Portraits of the Evangelists in Greek and Latin Manuscripts," *Art Studies, Medieval, Renaissance and Modern*, 5 (1927), 146 and pl. xviii, 173–76.

⁶⁹ *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts from American Collections. Exhibition in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, ed. G. Vikan (Princeton, 1973), 140 and fig. 65.

⁷⁰ Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten* (*supra*, note 22), 77 no. 161, and pl. 53. Also J. Strzygowski, *Hellenistische und Koptische Kunst in Alexandria* (Vienna, 1902), 11 and fig. 4.

Ainalov was the first to point out that this is a depiction of Golgotha, where, according to John Chrysostom and other writers, the Sacrifice had taken place.⁷¹ Most specific is the account of the pilgrim Theodosius from about A.D. 530 who says: "There is the mount of Calvary where Abraham brought his son to make a burnt offering of him. The hill is stony and is ascended by means of steps (*Mons petrosus est et per gradus ascenditur*)," and there are similar passages in an anonymous Breviary and the *Itinerary* of Antoninus of Piacenza, all quoted by Ainalov.^{71a} The same iconography is found on three more ivory pyxides,⁷² but none of them can be surely localized. The pyxis in Berlin, in which the Hellenistic tradition is particularly well preserved, has been ascribed to both Alexandria and Syria, whereas in the other three a local element begins to assert itself, which, in my opinion, points rather to Syria than to Egypt; this always allows Palestine, which is closely related, as another possibility. As in the previous cases, a *locus sanctus* picture is not confined to one particular medium and spreads beyond the borders of the Holy Land. An Armenian Gospel book from Etchmiadzin, dated 989, shows precisely the same steep steps leading to the burning altar while Isaac, with his arms fettered behind his back, stands at the bottom of the stairs (fig. 38).⁷³

Now there exists a second, unrelated representation of the same subject which refers to Jerusalem in a different way. In the bema of the church at Sinai, on the left pilaster flanking the apse with the Metamorphosis mosaic (fig. 1) there is an encaustic panel with the Sacrifice of Isaac painted on marble (fig. 39)⁷⁴ which corresponds to another painting on the right pilaster with the Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter,⁷⁵ both paintings prefiguring Christ's eucharistic sacrifice. Isaac is kneeling on an altar, which is within and raised above a walled city with a central gate, obviously meant to represent Jerusalem. Beyond this we cannot be sure which spot within the city is meant, since there are two traditions. The Christian, as we saw in the ivories, localizes the Sacrifice at Golgotha, whereas the Jewish, which is also shared by some Christians, places it on Mount Moriah, where Solomon had built the temple.⁷⁶ The altar on which Isaac kneels is a Christian one, covered, as I have already mentioned, with a cloth decorated with a cross and *gammadiae* in precisely

⁷¹ Ainalov, *Hellenistic Origins*, 94ff. and fig. 48.

^{71a} *Ibid.*, 98 and notes 116–18.

⁷² Ainalov quotes the pyxis in Bologna (*ibid.*, 94ff. and fig. 49=Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, no. 163, pl. 53), and Volbach adds two more, one in Trier (*op. cit.*, no. 162, pl. 53) and one in Rome (no. 164, pl. 53).

⁷³ Ainalov, *Hellenistic Origins*, 94 and fig. 47; F. Macler, *L'Evangile arménien. Édition phototypique du manuscrit No. 229 de la Bibliothèque d'Etchmiadzin* (Paris, 1920), pl. fol. 8r; L. A. Dournovo, *Miniatures arméniennes* (Paris, 1960), pl. on p. 29 (color).

⁷⁴ Maria G. Sotiriou, Τοιχογραφία τῆς Θυσίας τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ τοῦ Καθολικοῦ τῆς Μονῆς Σινᾶ, in 'Αρχ.'Εφ., 1953–54, pt. III (1961), 45ff. and pl. 1; Weitzmann, "The Jephthah Panel" (*supra*, note 46), 341 and fig. 3; *idem* (with Forsyth), *The Church and Fortress of Justinian* (*supra*, note 3), pls. LXXXII, CXXX, CXXXII A, CXXXIII A, CLXXXVIII, CXCII A, CXCIII A; *idem*, *Sinai Icons*, no. B.29, pls. LXXVII–LXXVIII.

⁷⁵ Weitzmann, "The Jephthah Panel," figs. 4–6; *idem* (with Forsyth), *The Church and Fortress of Justinian*, pls. CXXXI, CXXXII B, CXXXIII B, CLXXXIX–CXCII, CXCII B, CXCIII B; *idem*, *Sinai Icons*, no. B.30, pls. LXXIX–LXXXI.

⁷⁶ L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, I (Philadelphia, 1947), 285.

the same manner as the altar on the lid of the reliquary which stands within the grilled enclosure of the tabernacle of the Anastasis church (fig. 23).

In summarizing our observations about the *loca sancta* pictures I should like to emphasize the following three points:

- 1) that each *locus sanctus* allows of the creation of more than one archetype, and that each version may emphasize different aspects of the locality;
- 2) that the influence of the *loca sancta* pictures spread into different parts of the Christian world, thus providing evidence that Palestine played a significant role in the formation and dissemination of Christian iconography, in which topographical elements are stressed;
- 3) that the *loca sancta* pictures existed in a wide variety of media.

This last aspect is of considerable importance in view of the polarized position which scholars have taken. First Smirnov⁷⁷ and shortly thereafter Ainalov,⁷⁸ in discussing the Monza phials, believed that each of their scenes is an abbreviated commemorative image of a monumental composition which adorned the respective *memoria*, i.e., the *locus sanctus*. Grabar took a strong counter-position,⁷⁹ arguing that the existence of more than one picture for a site, as in the cases of the Crucifixion and Ascension, speaks against one formative monumental archetype, and also that some of the narrative Gospel events have no inherent monumental character and cannot be imagined as apse compositions. The answer to his first argument is that, admittedly, there existed two versions for some of the pictures. But this does not exclude the possibility that one of them, the "hieratic version" in the case of the Ascension which is conflated with the Ezekiel vision, had a monumental prototype, while the other, the "narrative version," is a version popular in the icon tradition. The answer to the second point is that not every monumental painting must be an apse composition. A case in point are the frescoes of S. Maria Antiqua in Rome, where panel-like frescoes, including the Crucifixion,⁸⁰ a theme which Grabar singled out as unsuitable for an apse composition, could be placed on almost any spot on the wall where they could be worshipped like icons. The borderline between fresco and icon painting is actually not very distinct at times.⁸¹ Grabar suggested the work of Constantinopolitan goldsmiths, chiefly in the form of medallions, as models for the ampullae. It may be argued that in almost all cases the scenes do not very well fit a roundel, but are forcibly squeezed into a format unsuitable for the subject, and that the figures would move much more freely and naturally in a rectangular format such as that of icons.

In my opinion there is no need to limit the invention of *loca sancta* pictures to any particular medium. The question is only which was the most popular

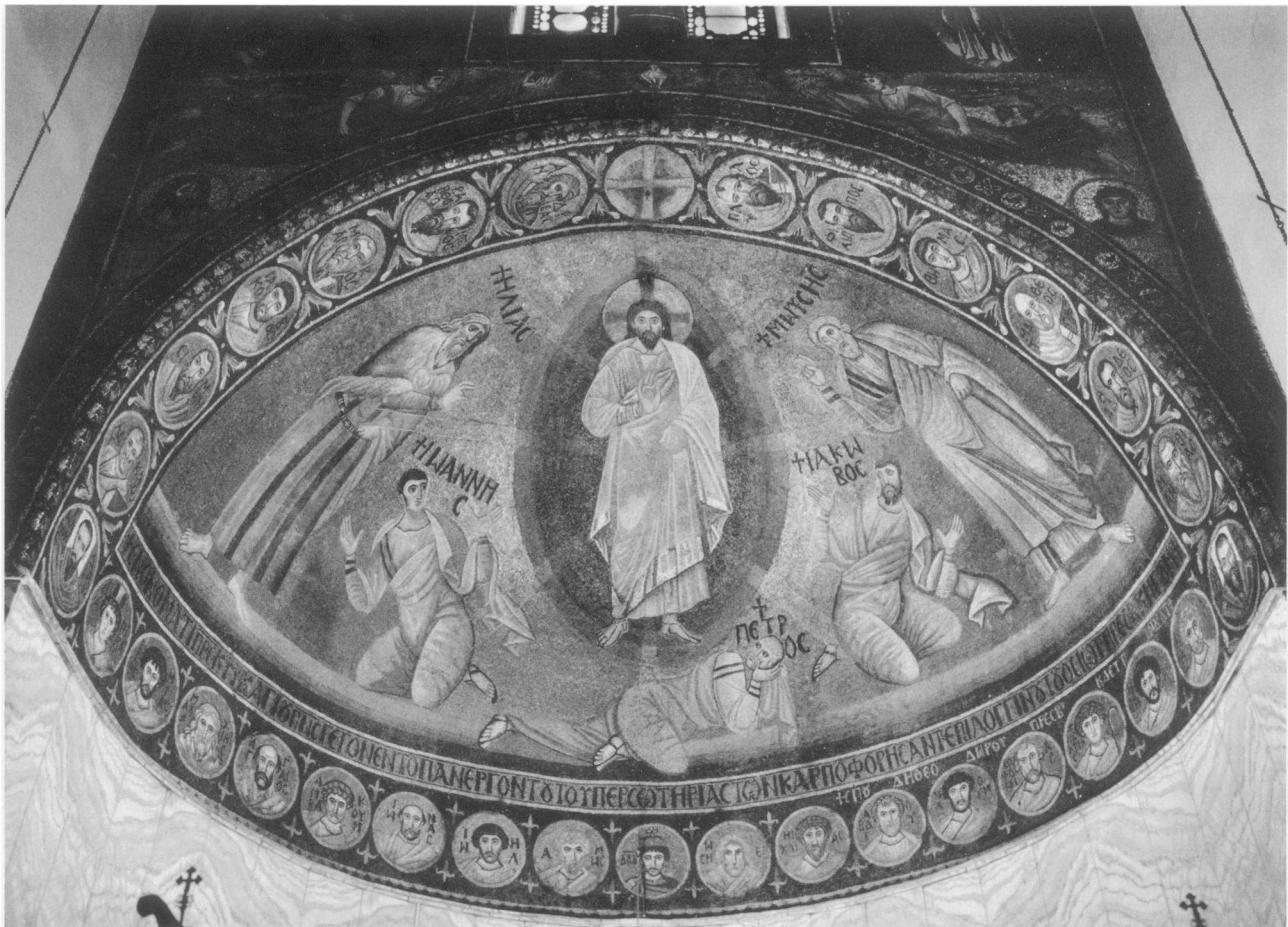
⁷⁷ Ja. I. Smirnov', "Hristianskija mozaiki Kipra," *VizVrem*, 4 (1897), 91ff.

⁷⁸ Ainalov, *Hellenistic Origins*, 274ff.

⁷⁹ Grabar, *Ampoules*, 47ff.

⁸⁰ De Grüneisen, *Sainte-Marie-Antique* (*supra*, note 39), pls. IC.XXXVI and IC.XXXIX.

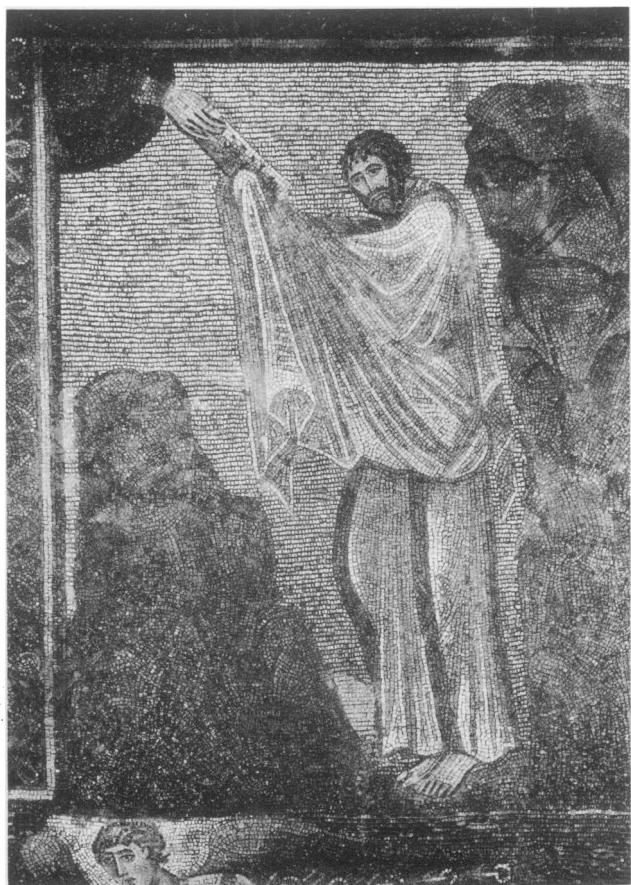
⁸¹ For the problem of the relationship between fresco and icon, cf. Weitzmann, "Some Remarks on the Sources of the Fresco Paintings of the Cathedral of Faras" (*supra*, note 19), 338-39.



1. Metamorphosis

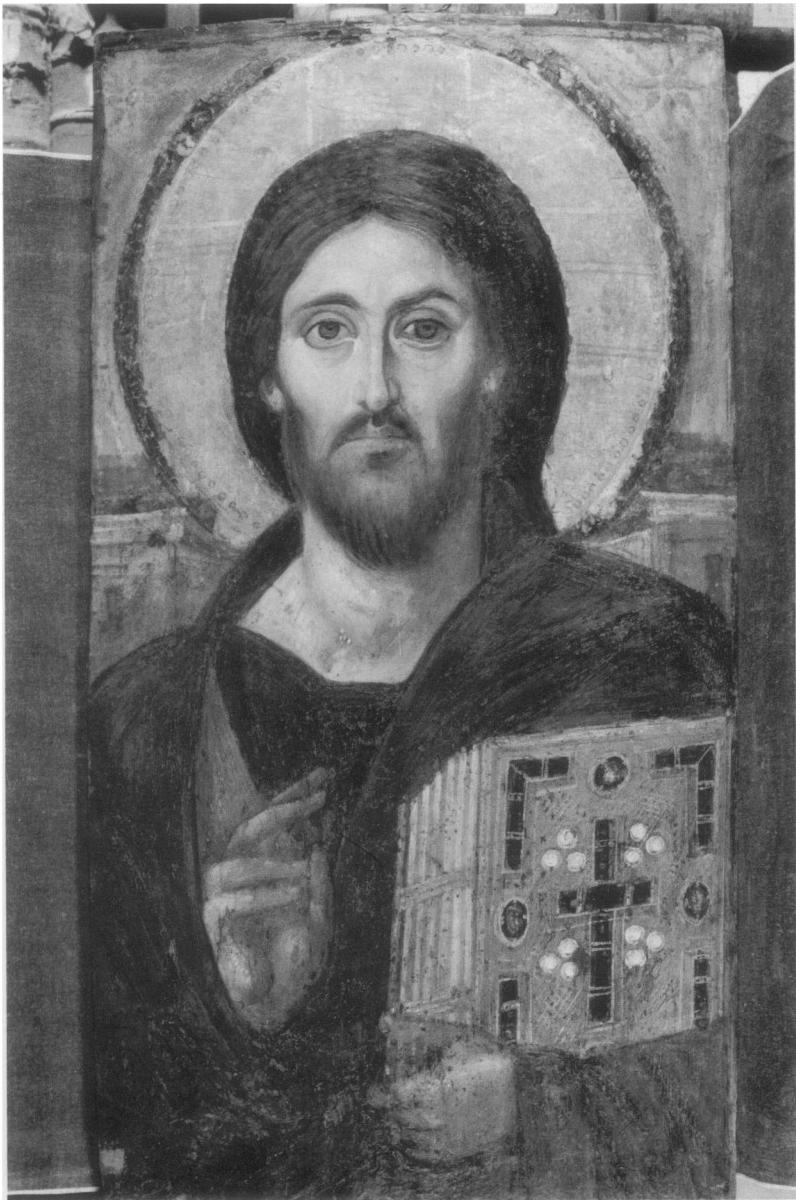


2. Bust of David



3. Moses Receiving the Tablets

Mt. Sinai, Monastery of St. Catherine. Apse Mosaic



4. Mt. Sinai. Icon, Bust of Christ



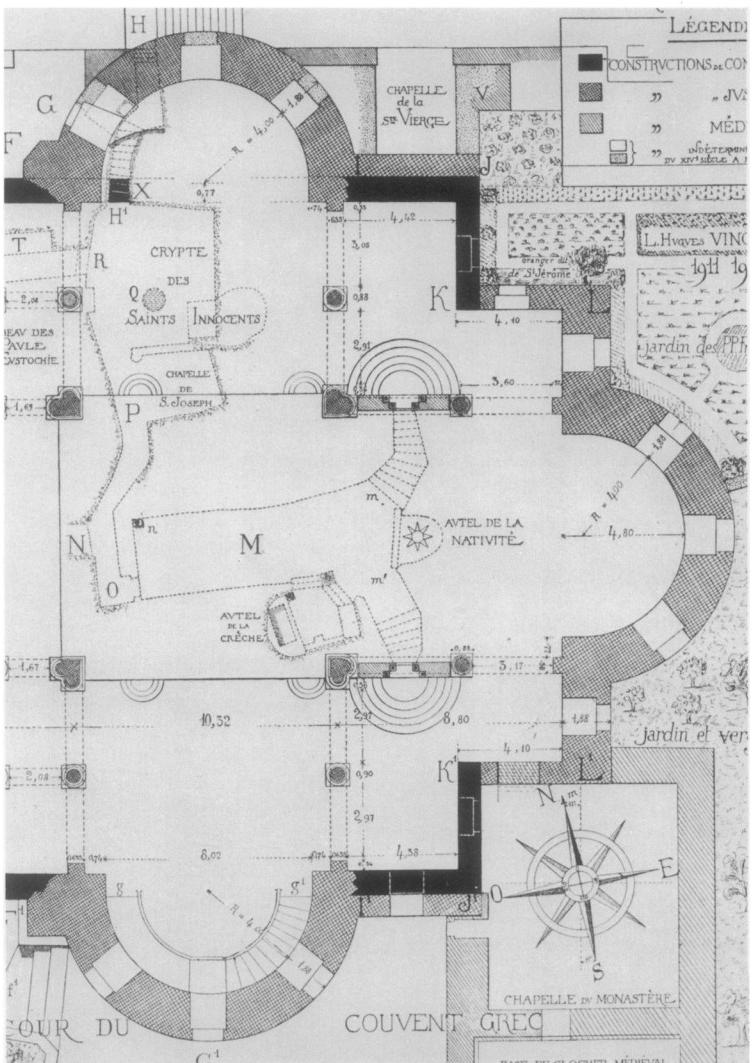
5. Monza, Cathedral. Ampulla 2 (detail),
the Nativity



6. Vatican Museum. Sancta Sanctorum
Reliquary (detail), the Nativity



7. Bagnocavallo. *Altare Fixum*



8. Bethlehem, Nativity Church. Ground Plan



10. Mt. Sinai. Icon, the Nativity



9. Florence, Laurent. Lib., Cod. Plut. I.56, fol. 4v (detail), the Nativity



11. Mt. Sinai. Icon (detail), the Nativity



12. Faras, Cathedral. Fresco



13. Manchester, John Rylands Library. Ivory

The Nativity



14. Ravenna, Archiepiscopal Palace.
Maximianus Cathedra (detail)



15. Washington, D. C., Dumbarton Oaks. Ivory



16. Paris, Bibl. Nat., Cod. copte 13, fol. 104v

The Nativity



18. Ampulla 13

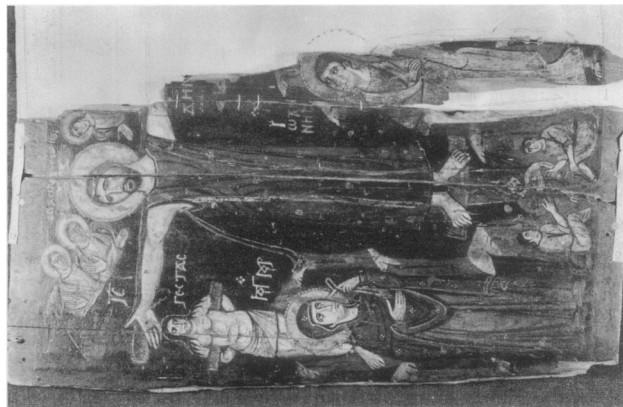
Monza, Cathedral. The Crucifixion



17. Ampulla 10



19. Mt. Sinai. Icon



20. Vatican Museum. Sancta Sanctorum Reliquary (detail)



21. Florence, Laurent. Lib., Cod. Plut. I.56, fol. 13r

The Crucifixion



22. Monza, Cathedral. Ampulla 3, the Women at the Tomb



24. Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks. Ampulla, the Women at the Tomb



23. Vatican Museum. Sancta Sanctorum Reliquary (detail), the Women at the Tomb



25. Mt. Sinai. Icon, Chairete



26. Monza, Cathedral. Ampulla 16



27. Mt. Sinai. Icon
The Ascension



28. Monza, Cathedral. Ampulla 10



29. Vatican Museum. Sancta Sanctorum Reliquary (detail)

The Ascension



30. Florence, Laurent. Lib., Cod. Plut. I.56, fol. 13v

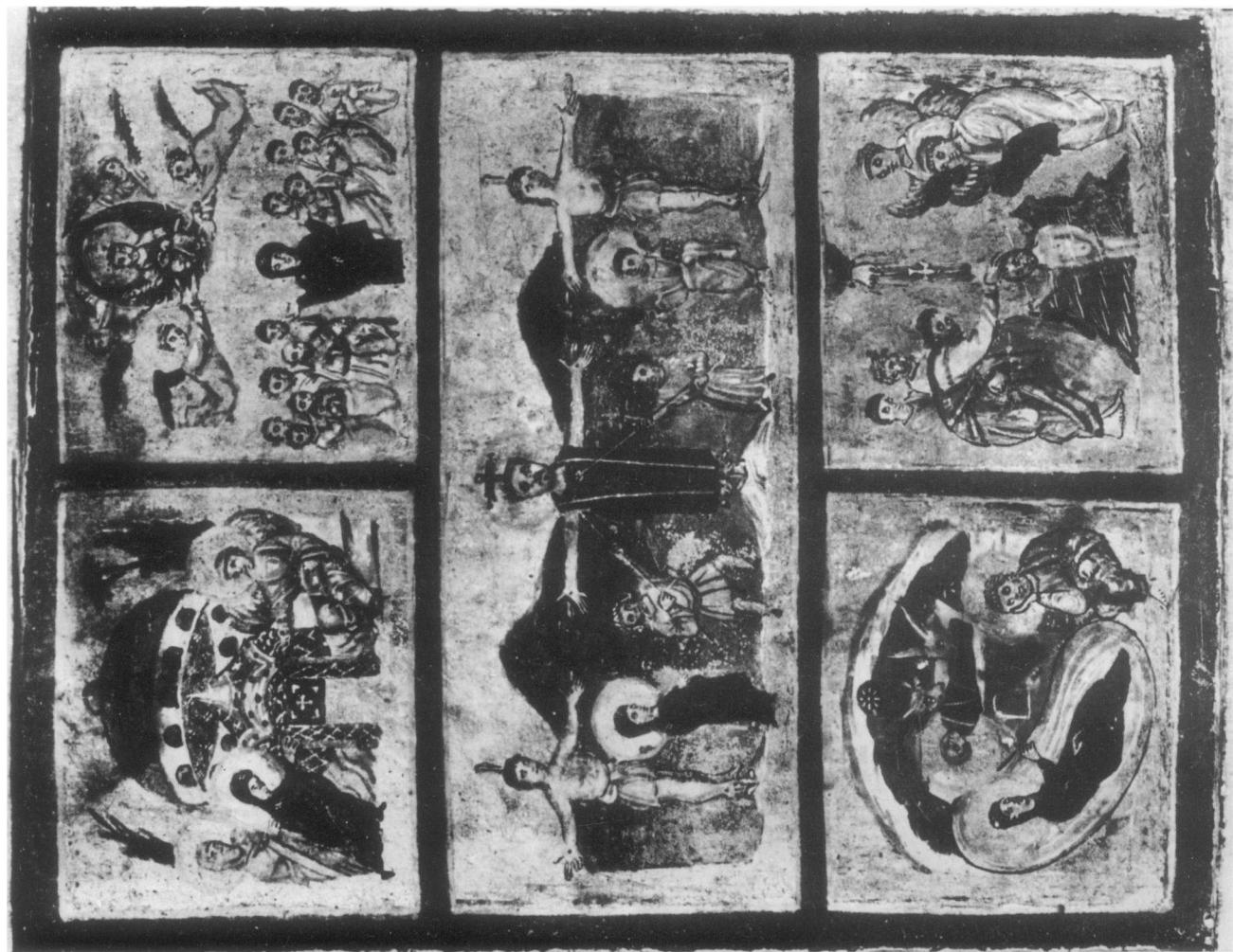


31. Bawit. Fresco

The Ascension



33. Mt. Sinai. Icon. Icon, the Nativity, the Ascension, and the Pentecost

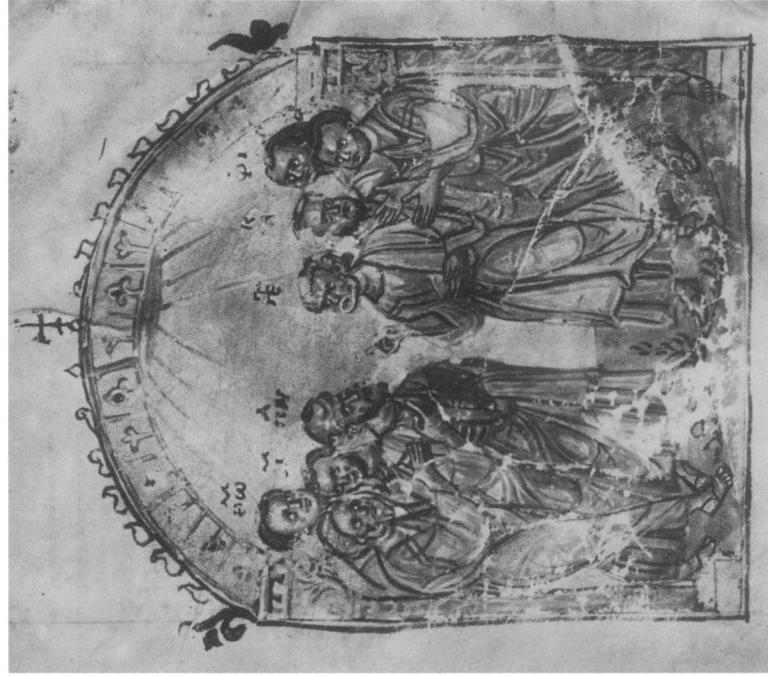


32. Vatican Museum. Sancta Sanctorum Reliquary, Lid



a. Fol. 34r, James b. Fol. 84r, David and James

35a-b. Mt. Athos, Kuthumusi, Cod. 412



36. Florence, Laurent. Lib., Cod. Conv.
soppr. 160, fol. 6v, the Pentecost



34. Florence, Laurent. Lib., Cod. Plut. I.56, fol. 14v, the Pentecost



37. Berlin, Staatliche Museen. Ivory Pyxis



38. Eriwan, Etchmiadzin Gospels, fol. 8v



39. Mt. Sinai. Painting on Marble Pilaster

The Sacrifice of Isaac



40. The Three Hebrews



41. Paul, Peter, Nicholas, and John Chrysostom



42. Chariton and Theodosios



43. Mt. Sinai. Icon, the Hodegetria



44. Paris, Bibl. Nat., Cod. gr. 923,
fol. 386v, John Chrysostom



45. Mt. Sinai. Icon (detail), John Chrysostom



46. Rome, S. Maria Egiziaca. Fresco, John and Peter



47. The Virgin with Panteleimon and Hermolaos



48. The Virgin with Moses



49. The Virgin with Joachim



51. St. Catherine and the Virgin

Mt. Sinai. Icons



50. Moses before the Burning Bush

Mt. Sinai Icons

53. St. Catherine, by Silvestros



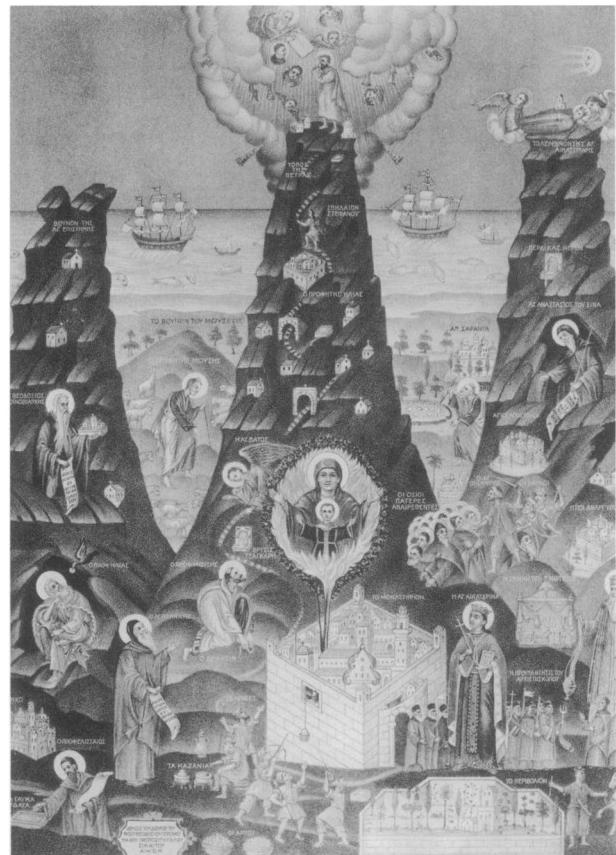
52. St. Catherine, by Jeremias Palladas





54. Icon of Mt. Sinai

Mt. Sinai, Monastery



55. Lithograph of Mt. Sinai



56. Budapest, National Museum. Mt. Sinai, by El Greco

and most suitable for the dissemination of *loca sancta* iconography. Here new material, chiefly from Sinai, as well as internal evidence seem to point to the icon as the focal point. We have already suggested that the lid of the reliquary box (fig. 32) could have served as an icon, and some of its scenes related to those on the ampullae are rendered in relatively greater detail and faithfulness, and are more closely linked to such early Sinai icons as those of the Nativity (figs. 10, 11), the Crucifixion (fig. 19), the Chairete (fig. 25), and the Ascension (fig. 27). Yet, this does not preclude that frescoes and mosaics also played a role in the formulation of *loca sancta* pictures. Such cases must, however, be decided individually, and the mere inclusion of elements referring to a holy site is insufficient evidence. The main criteria for a monumental prototype are formal aspects which suggest an architectural setting, as in the Pentecost picture of the Rabula Gospels (fig. 34), and iconographical complexity and uniqueness based on dogmatic or liturgical ideas, as in the Ascension picture of the same manuscript (fig. 30). It seems *a priori* unlikely that creations of rich programs which needed the assistance of a learned cleric were invented either by a miniature- or an icon-painter. The interchange between the media appears to have been rapid and widespread so that, even if an ampulla like that with the "hieratic type" of the Ascension (fig. 28) reveals traits of a monumental archetype, the dependence need not have been direct and icons could have served as intermediary.

While *loca sancta* pictures form the core of Palestinian art and served as the point of departure for our primarily iconographical study, another problem is whether they, and related works which are not tied to *loca sancta*, contribute to a clearer understanding of a specific Palestinian style. Most suitable for its definition is the Sancta Sanctorum lid (fig. 32). But, since this is not earlier than the sixth century, we must admit that we still do not know much about Palestinian representational arts of the fourth or even the fifth century. Morey had noted the strong classical flavor of the painting of the Sancta Sanctorum lid, and explained it by influence from Asia Minor, especially Cappadocia.⁸² He had also observed that certain miniatures of the Rabula Gospels, especially the Crucifixion and the Ascension (figs. 21, 30), show the same strong classical heritage that Ainalov had noticed before him. But Ainalov had another explanation: according to him, classical style had best survived in Alexandria, and while he, like Morey, associated the Rabula miniatures with Jerusalem, he thought the source for the style to be Alexandrian.⁸³ Grabar, on the other hand, held Constantinopolitan goldsmith work responsible for the classical style surviving in the Monza ampullae.⁸⁴ Thus, all three scholars agreed on the strong classical tradition in Palestine, but disagreed on its source. Recently, the theory that by the sixth century Constantinople had best preserved the classical heritage has gained support,⁸⁵ and here I should

⁸² Morey, "The Painted Panel" (*supra*, note 11), 164ff.

⁸³ Ainalov, *Hellenistic Origins*, 72ff.

⁸⁴ Grabar, *Ampoules*, 50.

⁸⁵ Weitzmann, "Das klassische Erbe in der Kunst Konstantinopels," 41ff. (repr. as "The Classical Heritage in the Art of Constantinople" [*supra*, note 9], 126ff.).

like to recall the beginning of this study, in which I introduced the apse mosaic (fig. 1) and the Christ icon on Sinai (fig. 4) as evidence for the existence on Palestinian soil of Constantinopolitan art, which is both of the highest quality and deeply steeped in the classical tradition.

The Ascension, which we considered to be the earliest Palestinian product among the Sinai icons (fig. 27), compares well, stylistically, to scenes on the lid of the Rome reliquary, especially in a detail like the piercing stare of pinpoint eyes. In making this icon our point of departure in sketching the development of a local Palestinian icon style, I am well aware that dates can only be suggested within broad limits. There is not a single firmly dated early icon in existence, and we can establish only a relative chronology, through the assumption that, with the termination of direct relations with Constantinople after first the Arab conquest and then Iconoclasm, the classical elements weakened and were gradually replaced by relatively more abstract forms.

To the seventh century belongs, I believe, the icon with the Three Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace (fig. 40).⁸⁶ The figures no longer stand firmly on the ground; the articulation of the bodies, though credible, is not particularly stressed, the outlines are straightened, and the highlights, though still suggesting their original purpose, begin to form patterns.

To be dated a little later, perhaps already into the eighth century, is a pair of triptych wings with St. Paul and St. Peter, St. Nicholas and St. John Chrysostom (fig. 41).⁸⁷ The proportions have become thick-set, the heads enlarged, the patternization of the highlights has increased and the painterly style has given way to a more graphic and linear design.

The tendency toward linearism increases in a triptych wing with the busts of SS. Chariton and Theodosios which I should like to attribute to the eighth-ninth century (fig. 42).⁸⁸ The lines of the faces are expressive but harsh, and the glance out of the corners of the eyes is vivid and reveals awareness of the outside world. In the design of the garments there has been introduced the abstract formula of the double-line fold, which often defies the natural fall of the drapery. With it, the last vestige of the classical rendering of drapery is lost, a decorative pattern taking its place. The final stage of this development may be seen in an icon with the bust of the Hodegetria in which the linear system has almost the quality of a primitive woodcut and all forms seem somewhat petrified (fig. 43).⁸⁹

If our dates for the Sinai icons seem acceptable, we are dealing with a time span of almost four centuries, from the sixth through the ninth. Furthermore, if we accept what seems to be a continuous development, without any

⁸⁶ G. and M. Sotiriou, *Icones*, I, figs. 12–13; II, 26–28; Weitzmann, *Treasury of Icons*, pp. x–xi, LXXIX, and pls. 8–9; *idem*, *Sinai Icons*, no. B.31 and pls. XVII, LXXXII–LXXXIII.

⁸⁷ G. and M. Sotiriou, *Icones*, I, figs. 21 and 23; II, 36ff.; Weitzmann, "Some Remarks," 332 and fig. 332; *idem*, *Sinai Icons*, no. B.33, pls. XXIV and LXXXV–LXXXVII.

⁸⁸ G. and M. Sotiriou, *Icones*, I, fig. 29; II, 43; H. P. Gerhard, *Die Welt der Ikonen*, 2nd ed. (Recklinghausen, 1970), 73 and pl. v; Weitzmann, "The Ivories of the So-called Grado Chair" (*supra*, note 31), 74 and fig. 47; *idem*, *Sinai Icons*, no. B.37 and pls. XXVI and CXI.

⁸⁹ *Idem*, "The Ivories of the So-called Grado Chair," 79 and fig. 57; *idem*, *Sinai Icons*, no. B.40 and pl. XCIV.

serious break, then we must conclude that icon painting continued uninterrupted in Palestine during the period of Iconoclasm. Not only was Palestine, then under Moslem rule, safe from enforcement of the imperial iconoclastic decrees issued in far-away Constantinople, but the fact that John of Damascus, abbot of the Sabas monastery near Jerusalem, wrote his treatise in defense of images during Iconoclasm suggests that he took care that their production was continued. Thus, we would even expect Palestine to have played an important role in perpetuating the art of icon painting in this most critical period. In this connection it is worth mentioning that the Metamorphosis mosaic of Sinai (fig. 1) was never whitewashed during Iconoclasm or at any other time. The monks must have felt secure in their unimpeded worship of the icons.

I fully realize that I have been able to present only the briefest sketch of the stylistic development of Palestinian icon painting, and that essential lacunae remain to be filled in. Moreover, wherever icons were produced in important centers we can assume the existence of scriptoria where books were illustrated. This raises the question whether there exist any traces of book illumination in the style of the Palestinian icons. At the Dumbarton Oaks Symposium of 1955 on "Palestine in the Byzantine Period," I read a paper entitled "John of Damascus and Book Illustration in Palestine," which dealt almost exclusively with one manuscript, the *Sacra Parallela* of John of Damascus in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, gr. 923, an abundantly illustrated codex with several hundred scenes and author portraits.⁹⁰ In my early writings I considered this manuscript an Italian copy of a Palestinian model,⁹¹ but later, chiefly in light of the newly discovered Palestinian icons of Sinai, I reversed my position and attributed it to Palestine proper.⁹² The often repeated bust of John Chrysostom, for instance (fig. 44), represents a type iconographically similar to that of the previously discussed triptych wings (figs. 41, 45). It shows none of the emaciation so characteristic of the later portraits of this Church Father, but a rather fleshy face with only a shadow of a beard. The hard lines of the face, especially of the eyebrows and the nose, are, in comparison to the triptych wings, more abstract and the garments show the somewhat later double-line fold system. In this particular point the miniature is very close to the Hodegetria icon (fig. 43), the latest in our series, and the date I proposed for the *Sacra Parallela*, the early ninth century, matches that suggested for the icon.

Recently, Grabar has contested the Palestinian origin of the *Sacra Parallela* codex, and tried to reattribute it to Italy.⁹³ He bases his argument chiefly

⁹⁰ J. R. Harris, *Fragments of Philo Judaeus* (Cambridge, 1886), with 2 pls.

⁹¹ K. Weitzmann, *Die Byzantinische Buchmalerei des IX. und X. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1935), 80ff. and pl. 86; *idem*, *Roll and Codex*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, 1970), 115ff., 133ff., 150ff., and figs. 103, 114–15.

⁹² *Idem*, *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination* (*supra*, note 9), 56, 62, 64, and figs. 35–36, 41, 43–44; *idem*, "The Ivories of the So-called Grado Chair," 56, 74, and figs. 21–22, 45.

⁹³ A. Grabar, *Les manuscrits grecs enluminés de provenance italienne (IX^e–XI^e siècles)* (Paris, 1972), 21ff. and pls. 6–11.

on stylistic comparisons with Italian works of art of the ninth and early tenth centuries, such as the mosaics of the S. Zeno chapel in S. Prassede in Rome, the frescoes of Cimitile near Naples, and those of S. Maria Egiziaca in Rome. If one looks into the faces represented in any of these three monuments, particularly those of the S. Maria Egiziaca frescoes (fig. 46),⁹⁴ one is struck by the blank stare of the wide-open eyes, devoid of any emotion. In contrast, the figures in the *Sacra Parallelia* perceive the outside world with vivid eyes and thereby reveal a self-consciousness which expresses itself also in the bodies' controlled movements.⁹⁵ The figures in the Western monuments move as if driven by external forces. Here we meet one of the basic differences between Byzantine and Western art, and it is mainly for this distinction (though not exclusively; there are other reasons, not to be discussed here) that I prefer to localize the *Sacra Parallelia* in Palestine and attribute it to artists who worked in a similar style and on a similar level of competence as those who made the contemporary Palestinian icons. If there are, nevertheless, connections in style between the *Sacra Parallelia* and the frescoes of S. Maria Egiziaca and Cimitile, which have been recognized by Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne⁹⁶ and Hans Belting⁹⁷ respectively, they are easily enough explained by the existence in Rome of a monastery of S. Saba, an offshoot of the Palestinian monastery of the same name.

The Palestinian style, as defined by a group of icons from the sixth century on, had run its course by the ninth century. Shortly after the end of Iconoclasm and the reaffirmation and expansion of Byzantine power under the Macedonian emperors, Constantinople began to reassert herself as arbiter in all cultural and artistic matters, and the renewed influence of the capital can be observed in Sinai icons from the early tenth century, among which is one with the Virgin and Child flanked by SS. Panteleimon and Hermolaos (fig. 47).⁹⁸ The reassertion of convincing body proportions, the heightening of the garments by well-understood reflections of light, the modeling of the faces are all signs of the renewed study of good classical models that had taken place in Constantinople. Yet, I am not sure that this icon is an import from the capital. I rather believe it is the product of a local school, perhaps at Sinai itself, under Constantinopolitan influence.

But rather than go any further into details of the stylistic development of Palestinian painting, I should like to return to our point of departure, the *loci sancti* pictures. Since Sinai is, as repeatedly stated, a holy site of Palestine, i.e., the then Palaestina Tertia, and at the same time the only such holy site with a continuous artistic history to the present day, it is proper

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, figs. 25 and 29.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, esp. figs. 24, 30, 32, and others as well.

⁹⁶ J. Lafontaine, *Peintures médiévales dans le Temple dit de la Fortune Virile à Rome* (Brussels, 1959), 49, 56f., and figs. 10, 16, 19–20.

⁹⁷ H. Belting, *Die Basilica dei SS. Martiri in Cimitile und ihr frühmittelalterlicher Freskenzyklus* (Wiesbaden, 1962), 89, 105ff., 108, 125, and fig. 51. Cf. also Belting's remarks about the *Sacra Parallelia* miniature and South Italy in general in *Studien zur Beneventanischen Malerei* (Wiesbaden, 1968), 245ff., 248, and figs. 272 and 276.

⁹⁸ Weitzmann, *Sinai Icons*, no. B.54 and pls. xxiii and cix.

to ask what were the *loca sancta* pictures of Sinai. Actually, the very icon of the Virgin between SS. Panteleimon and Hermolaos can be understood as a holy site picture, because the frontal-standing Virgin holding the seated Christ as if suspended in front of her is the very type which on some Sinai icons is inscribed ἡ βάτος, the Burning Bush.⁹⁹ It may be noted that the Virgin is not engulfed in the flames of the bush; this naturalistic detail becomes popular only at a later stage.¹⁰⁰

We even have evidence of the serial production of such Virgin icons. There is a group of no fewer than ten, all of which show an identical type of the Virgin ἡ βάτος; they are contemporary, to be dated at the turn of the twelfth-thirteenth century, and are obviously from the same workshop.¹⁰¹ Only the identity of the worshipers changes: from the patriarchs we have Abraham; from the prophets, Moses (fig. 48)¹⁰² and Isaiah;¹⁰³ from the New Testament, Joachim (fig. 49)¹⁰⁴ and Symeon; from the soldiers, St. George (twice) and St. Theodore; and from the monks, St. Sabas (twice).¹⁰⁵ The serial production, and the close stylistic relationship of the figure of the Virgin to one in the center of an Ascension in an iconostasis beam made *ad hoc*,¹⁰⁶ suggest that they are all products of an atelier working at Sinai. Whether the artists themselves came from Constantinople or were local craftsmen who worked under the influence of good Constantinopolitan models is a question which cannot be answered at the present state of our scholarship. What then is the purpose of such icons? Each worshiping saint is presumably the namesake of the donor, and thus such icons were commissioned by the donors, either to be left in the monastery as votive gifts, or to be taken home as souvenirs.

Moreover, in addition to the Virgin ἡ βάτος, we would also expect the scene of Moses before the Burning Bush to have been the theme of a *locus sanctus* picture, and the rich holdings of Sinai icons with that subject bear this out. One of them, of the Palaeologan period and of provincial style (fig. 50),¹⁰⁷ is of particular interest because it shows Moses loosening his sandal before the Burning Bush, which envelopes both the angel from the biblical narrative and the bust of the Virgin ἡ βάτος. Essentially, we have here the same fusion of historical event with *locus sanctus* iconography which we found in many of the holy site images of Jerusalem.

⁹⁹ G. and M. Sotiriou, *Icones*, I, fig. 155; II, 135ff.

¹⁰⁰ One of the earliest examples is a crusader icon of the 13th century; K. Weitzmann, "Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom," *DOP*, 20 (1966), 67 and fig. 35. A possible exception is a 9th- to 10th-century Sinai icon of the Ascension (Weitzmann, *Sinai Icons*, no. B.42 and pls. xxviii, xcvi, xcvi) which shows what looks like a burning bush behind the Orant Virgin.

¹⁰¹ Nine are still in the Sinai collection and the tenth, which came from Sinai, had in the nineteenth century been taken to Kiev, but was destroyed during the second world war.

¹⁰² Unpublished. The size, more or less the same as all within this set, is 23.1 × 18.6 cm.

¹⁰³ G. and M. Sotiriou, *Icones*, I, fig. 163; II, 143.

¹⁰⁴ Unpublished.

¹⁰⁵ For the icon of St. Sabas, once in Kiev, cf. O. Wulff and M. Alpatoff, *Denkmäler der Ikonenmalerei* (Hellerau bei Dresden, 1925), 122 and fig. 49.

¹⁰⁶ Weitzmann, *A Treasury of Icons*, p. xv and pl. on p. 32.

¹⁰⁷ Unpublished and kept in the Old Library, the present storeroom of more than one thousand icons. It measures 22.9 × 17.8 cm.

When around the tenth-eleventh century the bones of St. Catherine were brought from a chapel atop the Djebel Katrin into the monastery, and the latter's name was changed to St. Catherine's, it became desirable to have the new title saint appear in a *locus sanctus* picture. The result may be seen in an icon which combines the Virgin ἡ βάτος of a form closely associated with the serial type discussed before, but now engulfed in a burning bush, with a frontal-standing St. Catherine in imperial robes (fig. 51).¹⁰⁸ She replaces the worshiping saint and is herself worshiped, thus appearing almost an equal to the Virgin. In addition, there is a little figure of Moses loosening his sandal squeezed between the two hieratic figures, so that we actually have a triple image.

As time went on, St. Catherine began to replace the Virgin in the Sinai *locus sanctus* icons, and we can even follow the rare process of how an archetypal icon became the progenitor of innumerable copies. This archetype is a huge icon made for the new iconostasis by the Cretan painter Jeremias Palladias in A.D. 1612, in which St. Catherine is depicted seated in imperial garb, surrounded by objects alluding to her great learnedness and wisdom as well as by the attribute of her martyrdom, the wheel (fig. 52).¹⁰⁹ There are in the possession of the monastery a great many small copies of this icon, like the one signed by the Cretan painter Silvestros (fig. 53),¹¹⁰ while others were taken home by pilgrims and are today preserved in various collections of icons.¹¹¹

There is still another *locus sanctus* icon of Sinai which particularly deserves such a designation: the topographical picture which came into vogue about the sixteenth century (fig. 54).¹¹² It places Moses at the left before the Virgin in the Burning Bush alongside a depiction of the actual monastery, and Aaron at the right marking the site of the Golden Calf. In the background are the two mountain peaks: at the left the Djebel Musa, where Moses receives the tablets next to a chapel which is still in existence, and at the right the Djebel Katrin, where angels deposit the body of the Saint in front of a chapel dedicated to her and likewise still preserved. In the nineteenth century, with the increase of visitors and pilgrims to Sinai, the demand for *loca sancta* pictures could no longer be met with painted icons, and a lithographic reproduction took their place (fig. 55).¹¹³ It was made after an icon dated 1778 and can be bought by, or is made a gift to, visitors and pilgrims.

¹⁰⁸ Unpublished, stored in the Old Library. It measures 38.1 × 28.9 cm.

¹⁰⁹ A. Xyngopoulos, Σχεδίασμα Ἰστορίας τῆς Θρησκευτικῆς Ζωγραφικῆς μετά τὴν Ἀλωσιν (Athens, 1957), 214 and pl. 55, no. 2. For the setting in the iconostasis, cf. H. Skrobucha, *Sinai* (Olten–Lausanne, 1959), pl. on p. 93.

¹¹⁰ Unpublished, stored in the Old Library. It measures 21.8 × 17 cm.

¹¹¹ There is, e.g., a copy by Emmanuel Lambardos probably from the year 1620 in the Benaki Museum in Athens. A. Xyngopoulos, Κατάλογος τῶν Εἰκόνων, Μουσείον Μπενάκη (Athens, 1936), 30, no. 14, and pl. 13. Another one, likewise from the 17th century, is in the icon collection of S. Giorgio dei Greci at Venice. M. Chatzidakis, *Icônes de Saint-Georges des Grecs et de la Collection de l'Institut* (Venice, 1962), 113, no. 92, and pl. 56.

¹¹² This unpublished icon was last seen on the proskynetarion of the narthex of the church, but most likely is now also in the Old Library. It measures 26.6 × 21.2 cm.

¹¹³ Skrobucha, *Sinai*, fig. on page 74.

It can be demonstrated how such a topographical icon of small dimensions and modest artistic achievement inspired a spirited picture by a great painter, none other than El Greco. The painting once belonged to Fulvio Orsini in Rome, and is now in the National Museum in Budapest (fig. 56).¹¹⁴ To be dated around 1571, it assuredly is not painted from nature, and we have no reason to believe that El Greco himself had ever visited Sinai. There is no icon preserved on Sinai which might have inspired him, but rather the model must have been one of the undoubtedly numerous such *loca sancta* pictures either lost or not yet traced.¹¹⁵

Having started with Sinai, we end with Sinai, the only holy site with an artistic history uninterrupted to the present day. It thus seems reasonable to conclude that the conditions which prevailed here must have been more or less the same as those which produced *loca sancta* pictures in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and other places of Palestine. But, whereas in the latter places repeated raids by the Persians and the Arabs have destroyed most of the evidence, Sinai fortunately was spared. Yet, from such monuments as the lid of the Sancta Sanctorum reliquary box to the topographical picture of Sinai, we can still get a fair idea of what *loca sancta* pictures must essentially have been: souvenirs in various media, but foremost icons, which combined representations of biblical events with specific elements of a holy site.

¹¹⁴ A. L. Mayer, *Dominico Theotocopuli El Greco* (Munich, 1926), 50, no. 318, and pl. 1; L. Goldscheider, *El Greco* (Phaidon: New York, 1938), pl. 14.

¹¹⁵ All pictures of Sinai monuments, i.e., figs. 1–4, 10–11, 19, 25, 27, 33, 39–43, 45, and 47–54, were made by the Alexandria-Michigan-Princeton Expedition between the years 1958 and 1963.